



New Mexico VA Health
Care System
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Health Trends

Advanced Clinic Access: **DOING TODAY'S WORK TODAY**

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What if we could offer you, our veteran patients, an appointment with your own provider at a time that was convenient for you, even if that meant today? Advanced Clinic Access (ACA) is a new way of running the veterans medical center that will reduce the wait times for appointments and help other parts of the system work better for you, like phone calls and tests.

Under the old system, patients sometimes waited a long time to get in to see their provider. When people are sick, they don't want to wait to be seen. Also, follow-up appointments might be scheduled so far in the future that patients would forget them or the doctor would end up being out of the office and the appointment would have to be cancelled and rescheduled.

Under the ACA, you will not have to wait as long to get in to see your own provider. If we need to see you back in six months to a year, we will put your information in the computer. A letter will be sent to you closer to the time of your check-up and you can call and schedule your appointment at a time that is convenient for you. You will hear about new options to get your care, like telephone visits, telehealth, and shared medical appointments (group visits).

You can help us keep this new system running smoothly if you do the following:

- ⌚ Call and cancel appointments you can't keep. Make room for your fellow veterans.
- ⌚ Call before you walk-in so we can be ready for you.
- ⌚ Use the automated pharmacy refill line to order your medicine refills: 505-256-5767. Or if you live outside of Albuquerque, call toll free at 800-465-8262, ext. 5767.
- ⌚ Keep a list of all your medicines in your wallet so you will have the list with you at your appointment.
- ⌚ If you have a new medicine from a private doctor, bring it with you to your appointment.
- ⌚ Write down your medical questions before your appointments and bring them with you.

Advanced Clinic Access is just getting started in Albuquerque in primary care and we hope you will be able to see a reduction in wait times for an appointment this spring. Some medical clinics and behavioral health have already reduced wait times. Surgery and dental clinics are working on making changes as well. Those of you receiving treatment at community based outpatient clinics will also enjoy the benefits of this program in the near future. For more information about Advanced Clinic Access, check the bulletin boards in the Albuquerque GMED clinics for an update, or ask one of the providers or staff at your primary care clinic for more information.

Attention New Mexico veterans: Do you have an old photograph of yourself from your "active duty" days that you would like to share with others? We are constructing a new veteran appreciation display at our main medical center in Albuquerque. The display, entitled "Affirming the Commitment," will be in the lobby of Building #41. If you have a photograph no larger than 5x7 inches that you would like displayed on this board, please send it to us. This could be a photograph of you in the field, on a ship, in the cockpit, or perhaps your official military photograph. Please send a photograph with only one person in it. Photographs with more than one person in them will not be used in this display. Be sure to include your **name**, your **branch of service**, and a **return address**. Mail it to:

**New Mexico VA Health Care System
Attn: Public Affairs Specialist (001P)
1501 San Pedro Dr. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87108-5153**

We will send your photograph back to the address you have provided. Photographs in this display will periodically change, so that over time, all participants will have their photo displayed.

You CAN live with osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis, is a joint disease that mostly affects cartilage.

Cartilage is the slippery tissue that covers the ends of bones in a joint. Healthy cartilage allows bones to glide over each other and helps absorb shock of movement.

In osteoarthritis, the top layer of cartilage breaks down and wears away, allowing bones under the cartilage to rub together. The rubbing causes pain, swelling, and loss of motion in the joint. Over time, the joint may lose its normal shape, and bone spurs may grow on the edges of the joint. Bits of bone or cartilage can break off and float inside the joint space, which causes more pain and damage.

People with osteoarthritis often have joint pain and reduced motion. Unlike some other forms of arthritis, osteoarthritis affects only joints and not internal organs. It can occur in any joint, but most often it develops in the hands, knees, hips, and spine.

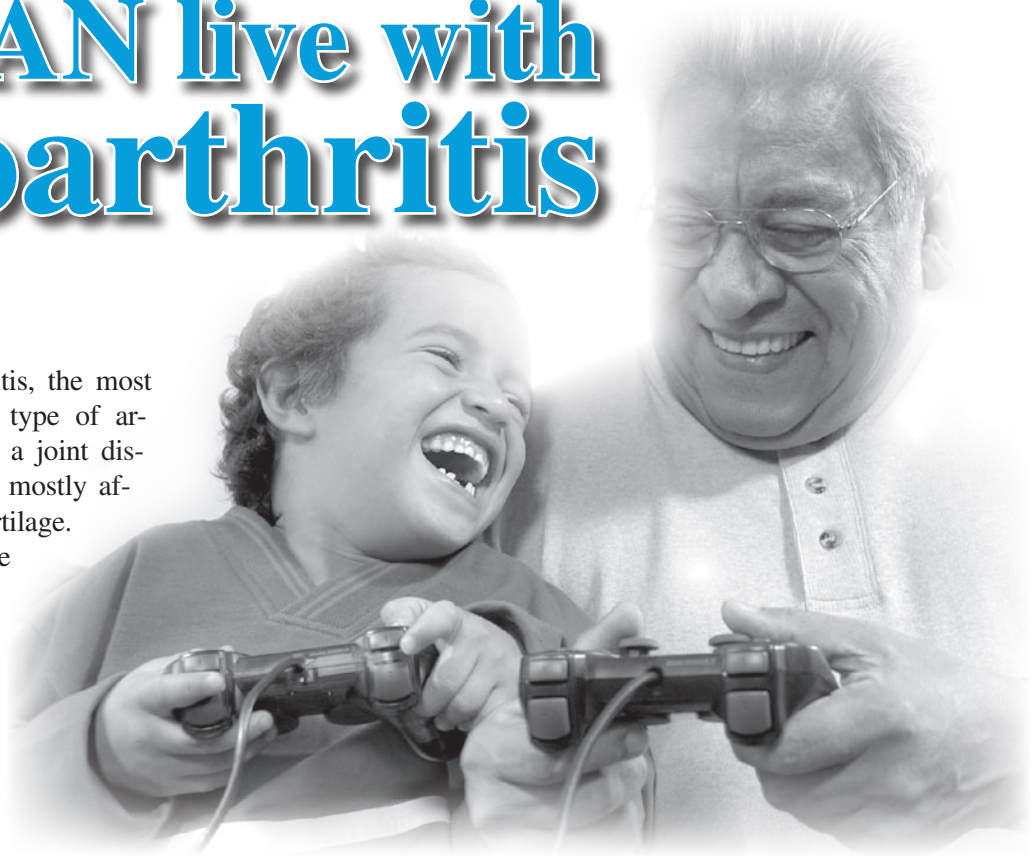
Warning signs of osteoarthritis are:

- ▶ Steady or on-and-off pain in a joint
- ▶ Stiffness in a joint after getting out of bed or sitting for a long time
- ▶ Swelling or tenderness in one or more joints
- ▶ A crunching feeling or the sound of bone rubbing on bone

How is osteoarthritis treated?

Doctors often combine treatments to fit a patient's needs, lifestyle, and health. Osteoarthritis treatment has four main goals:

- ▶ To improve joint care through rest and exercise
- ▶ To keep a healthy body weight
- ▶ To control pain
- ▶ To achieve a healthy lifestyle



Treatment plans can involve:

- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Weight control
- ▶ Rest and joint care
- ▶ Pain relief
- ▶ Medicines
- ▶ Alternative therapies
- ▶ Surgery

Self-management programs and a good-health attitude can help people:

- ▶ Understand the disease and reduce pain while staying active
- ▶ Cope with their body, mind, and emotions
- ▶ Have more control over the disease
- ▶ Live an active, independent life
- ▶ Focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses
- ▶ Build fitness and healthy eating into their daily routines
- ▶ Develop ways to lower and manage stress

With proper management, many of the symptoms of osteoarthritis can be reduced and you can continue to enjoy many activities. Osteoarthritis is a disease you can live with!

MILK

Good For You at Any Age

Y

ou grew up hearing that milk builds healthy bodies, but did you know that it also helps to maintain one?

Milk not only supports bone health by fighting osteoporosis, it also fights hypertension, colon cancer, and could help you lose weight!

☒ **Bones:**

One of the most significant factors in reducing the risk of fracture as you age is through calcium intake. Calcium is vital in muscle contraction and relaxation, blood clotting and the transmission of nerve impulses. If you don't get the calcium you need in order for your body to function properly, it will pull it from your bones. Include at least three servings of dairy products to your menu each day to maintain healthy bones.

☒ **Weight loss:**

Recent research shows that by including 24 ounces of low fat or fat free milk a day in your reduced calorie diet, you will burn more fat and lose more weight than by just cutting calories. In one study, participants consuming three to four servings of milk or milk products per day in a reduced calorie diet averaged weight losses of 24 pounds in 24 weeks. Studies also indicate that more weight will be lost in the abdominal area when milk is included in the diet.

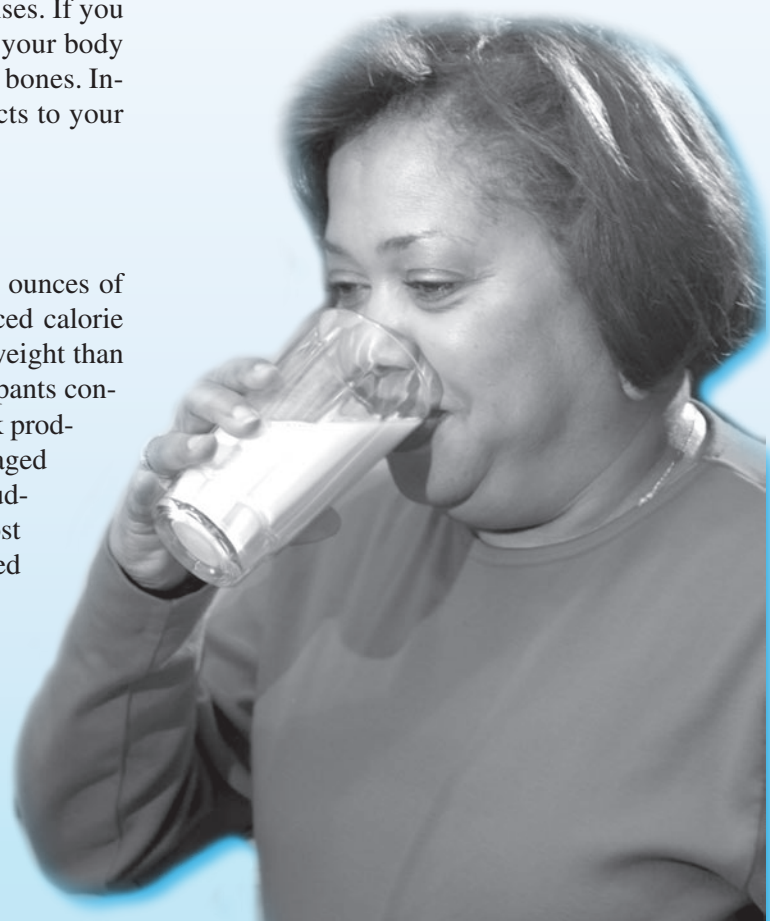
☒ **Hypertension:**

One in four Americans suffers from hypertension, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke. Numerous studies indicate that including low fat or fat free milk in your low fat diet will help to reduce hypertension.

☒ **Cancer:**

Recent research indicates that consuming at least three servings of low fat dairy products per day may help to reduce the risk of colon cancer, the third leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Although this area of research is new, studies have shown positive benefits.

Drink a glass of milk with your grandkids, make a low fat milkshake, eat some cottage cheese, add a slice of cheese to your sandwich, enjoy some yogurt – and remember – milk is good for you at any age.



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

75th Anniversary

On July 21, 2005, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) celebrated its 75th birthday. Anniversaries of any sort tend to evoke similar reflections: the legacy of the past and the promise of the future. The 75th anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs is no different.

On July 21, 1930, with the stroke of a pen, President Herbert Hoover consolidated all government activities related to veterans matters into a single agency. In doing so, President Hoover created the original Veterans Administration and set this nation on a course of caring for veterans in ways we doubt he could have imagined.

In 1930, VA treated 54,000 patients in 54 hospitals nationwide. Seventy-five years later, our patient rolls have increased nearly 100 fold, with some 5.2 million patients receiving treatment at 157 VA Medical Centers and more than 850 community clinics. Today, VA runs the nation's largest integrated health care system. Our staff will treat veterans with more than 50 million outpatient visits this year and fill more than 100 million prescriptions.

VA professionals do their jobs so well that a recent RAND Corporation study revealed that VA patients receive significantly better care than private-sector patients. The headline of a July 18 article in *U.S. News*

and *World Report* noted VA hospitals "are models of top-notch care," and a January 2005 article in the *Washington Monthly* aptly described the VA Medical System as "the best care anywhere."

The Veterans Health Administration is also responsible for more than 10,000 medical research projects that are currently underway. Over the years, this legacy of research has resulted in VA playing a key role in the development of the cardiac pacemaker, the CT scan, and improvements in the treatment of high blood pressure, diabetes and other ailments.

VA has been home to three Nobel Prize winners, and more than half of the physicians practicing medicine in the United States today received some of their training at a VA Medical Center. In this way, VA touches the lives of virtually all Americans.

VA remains a most remarkable story in American history. On July 21, we began a year-long observance of the 75th anniversary

of VA and it is our pledge to use this occasion to build on the VA legacy. It is a legacy of a governmental department staffed by more than 235,000 professionals dedicated to one proposition: to care for those who have borne the battle, and their widows and their orphans. We are the agents of the American people who want us to care for those who have cared for us, many with their lives and limbs.



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For newsletter information, contact:

Bill Armstrong, Public Affairs Specialist
New Mexico VA Health Care System, at 505-265-1711, ext. 2220

Health Trends is designed to provide general health and wellness information and news about services provided by VISA 18. *Health Trends* is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your healthcare provider.

You can directly enroll into the Albuquerque VA Medical Center's Smoking Cessation class by calling Centralized Scheduling at 505-265-1711, ext. 2743. If you have questions about this class, call 505-265-1711, ext. 5586 (outside the Albuquerque area, call 1-800-465-8262, ext. 5586). For details about the phone-based Community Outreach Smoking Cessation Program, call 505-265-1711, ext. 5584 (outside of the Albuquerque area call 1-800-465-8262, ext. 5584).

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.
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